

The Church Times.

HALIFAX, SATURDAY, APRIL 4, 1857.

EDUCATION.

A recent *Quebec Chronicle*, copies from the *Montreal Gazette*, an interesting account of the ceremonies at the opening of the McGill Normal School in the last named city. We have copied therefrom the Speech of the Bishop of Montreal, which deserves the attention of the people of this Province, as showing the position in which the Protestant population of that section of Canada, who are the minority, stand, with reference to their co-religionists the Romanists, who are the majority. The Educational law recognizes, it will be seen, only two classes of religionists—Protestants and Catholics—and under it the latter (the majority) have been provided with separate schools, while the Protestants, who are not disposed to accept education without religion, and who must be as desirous as the Romanists that their children should be well grounded in the doctrinal tenets of their respective persuasions, are merged into one class, to get along as they best can under a system which in its nature has a tendency to weaken their attachment to their distinctive forms of Christianity. This is a partial mode of dealing with the Educational question; it is unfair both in theory and practice, and illustrates the plausibility with which a vicious principle may be covered when the power exists to put it in operation. It is not Romanism that is the religion of the land, and it ought to receive no more consideration from an impartial Government, than any other of the various denominations into which Christianity, which is the fundamental principle, is divided. If one religious body can claim the privilege of having distinctive schools, all the rest are equally entitled to it. But in this instance all the rest have been forced into a compromise of their distinctive principles, in order to obtain from the State such an amount of encouragement as will enable them to combine with the secular education of their youth the first principles of Christianity. The Romanist separate schools educate their scholars as Roman Catholics—but the Protestant schools do not know to what persuasion theirs belong, or what they may become from their promiscuous association. The absence from the Protestant schools of this element, is not compensated, that we can discover, by any provision otherwise made to secure it, and it will have to be supplied by voluntary exertion, which, however energetic, must be expensive in itself, and is an injustice to the Protestants when contrasted with the advantage which the State affords to Romanism.

The Educational question ought soon to occupy the attention of our Legislature. We are not much surprised that hitherto they have failed in their attempts to carry it through. It must be more manifest now than ever, that the general system, embodied in the Bill brought into the Assembly during the last Session, and which the Government could not carry, will have but a poor chance of success with the new Administration, who upon this question if no other, must deem themselves pledged to their Roman Catholic supporters. But it is just as manifest that any attempt to establish separate Roman Catholic schools without giving to every other denomination equal privileges, would be met by determined opposition to the measure. If the compromise plan should become law, all who will not yield must be content to forego the advantage of government aid—and the minority here would then perhaps have as good plea of injustice to urge as the Protestant minority of Lower Canada. If the denominational system is made the law of the land, it will only be an extension of the denominational college plan, and the census will form the basis upon which Government aid will be rendered, leaving the religious education of youth to be directed exclusively by the religious teachers of the people, subject to such supervision and regulation as the Legislature in its wisdom may think fit to prescribe.

So far as the Church is concerned, there was no doubt a disposition to have adopted the Government measure, if it could have passed unanimously. The Church's system is as well calculated as any other, at least, to provide for the religious teaching of the young, independent of any connection with state educational systems—and the Sunday school and public catechising, worked by an active and energetic clergy, would have supplied to a great extent, the religious element wanting in the common school. There might be a danger that this supplemental teaching would not be uniform, and being less compulsory than the secular instruction, and as imposing a double and divided restraint upon the youthful mind, it might not be generally taken advantage of. It

would without doubt have devolved upon the clergy a large amount of self-denying and gratuitous labour. As we before stated, however, there is little reason now, to suppose that the mixed system of education will form the basis of any legislative measure of the present administration. Nor can we say at this moment with reference to the component parts of any other measure, what would be most likely to give general satisfaction. It is almost a matter of regret that the subject had not received careful attention during the meeting of Synod, the practical value of which, in dealing with all questions, whether of education or church spoliation, must we think be more and more apparent. Of one thing we are assured,—that the Churchmen of Nova Scotia will sanction no system that shall not give them an equal privilege with all other religious bodies; and they are strong enough and numerous enough to watch over and protect their own interests, however menaced—and especially in a matter that involves not only their well being in this world, but largely concerns their eternal happiness.

"The Bishop said,—I am sure, Sir, that the able and eloquent speech which you have just delivered has been listened to with the greatest interest by us all, wherein you have given so full an account of the progress of education in this province, and also of the steps taken to found this establishment; and as others will address this meeting after me, better able than I am to enter into any statements, respecting the manner in which the work of training and education is to be carried on in these schools, I will rather content myself, at this commencement of our operations with some remarks on the general principles upon which the Institution is established. I need not occupy your time now for the purpose of endeavoring to prove that there can scarcely be any more important question for the consideration of statesmen and philanthropists than that of the general education of the people; nor need I enter into any details to convince those here present that, notwithstanding all that has been already accomplished, there was much work to be done in this department in the Province of Lower Canada, while without the active interference and influence of the government there was no prospect of any general or effectual progress being made. And one of the greatest wants to be provided for was deficiency of teachers, I mean as regards their regular training and fitness for the work to be intrusted to them. In a country like this where there is no recognition of any particular faith, as representing the Church, which is to receive the special countenance of the State, it is certainly no easy task to carry into operation any general system that shall approve itself to the several religious communities. We have seen too, in England, now, year after year, attempts have been made in the Imperial Parliament to introduce some general system of education; and while those who dissent from the established Church have been able to prevent any plan which should be carried out on the principles of that Church; at the same time not only the Church of England, but the Presbyterians, especially of the Church of Scotland, and the Wesleyans, have strenuously resisted any system which should recognize education as something independent of religion. And I believe that there is a very large proportion of all religious bodies here in Lower Canada who will echo that sentiment. I feel quite sure, Sir, that you will for one. For myself I have not one particle of faith in the notion that society can be regenerated or vice eradicated by any amount of mere secular instruction,—by any amount of knowledge of the sciences or languages. There may be often an imposing array of statistics, showing the number of convicted criminals who can neither read nor write; but we must remember that, besides the want of education, the majority of them have in all likelihood been led into crime by the difficulties of their social position, by the sufferings of poverty, or unavoidable close contact with evil companions. But Sir, there are many revelations of cases of fearful depravity and deep villany constantly being made in these days amongst persons of a very different class. It was no want of education, in the popular sense, that led to the vast frauds of Sadleir, Redpath, or Huntington, or to such murders as those of Cook or Burdell. And these are only more prominent types of a class, on either side of the Atlantic, which it is to be feared, is terribly on the increase—the educated and accomplished villain; of such persons certainly David speaks, when he says:—"My heart sheweth me the wickedness of the ungodly, that there is no fear of God before his eyes." Notwithstanding all the wonderful blessings, which are so often promised, as the fruits of increased education, I must remain sceptical, as to any real and abiding good, if there is any deliberate attempt at acknowledging its sufficiency apart from the fear of God and knowledge of the Gospel. It is clear, however, that in an establishment like this, supported by the public funds, and admitting persons of various communions, there must be some modification of faith provided—some compromise allowed. And there are more who may be in consequence inclined to refuse their co-operation because they cannot have the entire management in their own hands, and everything at their own will. We cannot, however, stand still; we must be doing something for the education of the people; and I conceive that it is our wisdom to do it patriotically as best we can with the means offered to us. And while I protest against the ignoring religion, as the basis of all sound education,

while at all times and on all occasions I shall reiterate that protest, and accept the present organization, not as in itself the best, but the best attainable one; and while, by the arrangements provided, we seek to bring all the students in the school into some direct connection with their clergymen and under specific religious training, I and those who act with me will endeavor, as far as any small portion of the task may depend upon us, in all good faith, to work out for the benefit of this Lower Province the objects of this institution. You, Sir, and the other gentlemen who have been interested in forming this institution, have, I am well aware, wished to do justice to the work we have, during the last three years, when the ground was quite unoccupied, been trying to accomplish in our own Normal and Model School in Bonaventure street; and it would have been both unwise and injurious on our part to have continued any rivalry, still more so any opposition to this more fully organized establishment; and you have paid a just tribute to the merits of Mr. Hicks, our late Head Master, by placing him over this Institution. Henceforth, Sir, it will be only by acting together in good faith that we can hope to see it prosper; and there will be much need of mutual forbearance and discretion in those who have the conducting of it, and also of that great grace of Christian charity, which thinketh no evil, and which is never ready to impute wrong motives and designs to others. And there will be especial need, when we are thus united together, that there shall be no attempts through any opportunities offered by means of this institution, at making proselytes of any of the students to a different communion from the one to which they originally belonged.

"I would wish to take this opportunity of recording my own judgment of the very great injury that is so constantly done by the injudicious and rash attempts which are often made to unsettle the faith of others. It may be a most laudable wish to make converts of all around us to our own faith, which we, each of us, I presume, think the true one; but it is far easier to shake our neighbor's faith, in what he has been brought up from a child, than to make a convert of him to our own creed. It requires not only much zeal but also much self denial and discretion, and humility to attempt such a work with good hope of success, lest in seeking to give our brother a purer faith, we leave him with none at all. And while I hope that those engaged in this Institution will act in good faith one towards another, I trust the Church of England and other religious communions who have an especial interest in the McGill Normal School and the Protestant schools throughout the Province, will continue to receive fair and liberal treatment, as compared with the Church of Rome. We are even, when thus associated together but a small minority in this Lower Province; but we are nevertheless, not an unimportant part of the community. Still, when it was decided to place the education of this portion of the Province under the direction of a single Superintendent, we could not have expected that he should have been selected from that minority. On this account, we have no right to be dissatisfied; but I cannot but remember that while we are certainly at some possible risk and some disadvantage—some necessary compromise—thus associated together, the schools provided for your own Church are left under the undivided charge of her own body. And more than this, besides the funds derived from the annual Parliamentary grant, the Church of Rome has had secured to her, by an act of the Government, very large endowments—one special object of which, by the very tenor of the grant, is the education of the people. We have, therefore, some right to expect that in the distribution of the annual Parliamentary grant, as some compensation, and to allay any possible discontent, especially as coming through a Superintendent who is of the faith of the majority, that if there be any favor shown, the balance should rather be thrown on the side of the minority. I am quite aware that you will have no easy task to fulfil in the administration of your office. Hitherto, as far as I can learn and my own observation has gone, you have given very general satisfaction to all reasonable minds. And, certainly all must acknowledge the attention and energy and talent with which you have applied yourself to the work before you. At present to the great credit of this portion of the Province with which your office is connected, there is, I think, very generally, an exceeding kind and good feeling between all classes of the population, consisting of such different races and different creeds—a state of things which, I hope, may long continue; and while I will leave others to note the progress that is making in commercial greatness, in arts and manufactures, I would wish to be able if life be spared to us, to chronicle, as years pass by, the increasing success of the institutions whose commencement you are now inaugurating, and the good effects of all our efforts in the cause of education, and above all, that while our people advance in intelligence and in worldly greatness, that intelligence may ever be sanctified by heavenly grace, and their earthly treasures far surpassed by those enduring riches which are being laid up in Heaven, not for the worldly wise nor worldly mighty, but for the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus."

Three of the newly returned members of Government, the Hon. the Attorney General, the Hon. the Provincial Secretary, and the Hon. the Solicitor General, came to town on Thursday evening from their respective constituencies. They were escorted to the city from the Four-mile-house by a large train of carriages, waggons, and all descriptions of vehicles, and by a miscellaneous concourse of pedestrians, of all classes, sizes, and ages, who had assembled to do them honor. The procession was headed by a band in a large waggon, and proceeded through some of the principal streets to the